



# NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

## The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #PHX-16-005

### **TITLE: Support for the Bureau of Land Management's Land Management Plan for the Upper Draanjik River Subunit**

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**WHEREAS**, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

**WHEREAS**, on July 29, 2016, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) released its Eastern Interior Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (PRMP/FEIS); and

**WHEREAS**, the PRMP/FEIS has taken over eight years to develop and will serve as a guide for the next twenty years in the management of approximately 6.5 million acres of public lands in Eastern Alaska; and

**WHEREAS**, almost half of the planning area includes the traditional territory of the Gwich'in Athabascan, the traditional and customary users of the land; and

**WHEREAS**, the PRMP/FEIS is divided into four subunits that contain different land characteristics, the Upper Draanjik River Subunit (UDRS) makes up about a third of Alaska's Eastern Interior and is the Gwichyaa Zhee Gwich'in Tribal Government and the Chalkyitsik Village Council's (Tribes) traditional homelands; and

**WHEREAS**, the UDRS is nearly 2.4 million acres and is located in a region that has never had a land use plan and one that has sustained indigenous communities for thousands of years; and

**WHEREAS**, since the beginning of the planning process in February of 2008, the Tribes have been passionate in defending the traditional homelands of the Gwich'in Athabascan peoples to ensure that the lands and cultural resources are sustained for future generations; and

**WHEREAS**, the Tribes in the Draanjik region, the Gwichyaa Zhee Gwich'in Tribal Government and the Chalkyitsik Village Council, committed significant time, energy, and resources in an effort to work closely with the BLM through the lengthy planning process to voice concerns and advocate for critical protections, to create a final plan that would preserve the region's subsistence resources, watersheds, and the habitats upon which people, fish, birds, wildlife and entire ways-of-life depend; and

**WHEREAS**, the tribal focus has largely been on the Draanjik River watershed, which flows into the Black River Slough and is a tributary of the Porcupine and Yukon Rivers, where the plants, fish, and wildlife not only provide the majority of the food consumed, but the land and natural resources provide fundamental cultural meaning to the Gwichyaa Zhee and Draanjik Gwich'in people; and

**WHEREAS**, in BLM's initial draft plan recommended that 100 percent of the UDRS be opened to mineral development, but the final BLM plan recommends that 77 percent of the UDRS be closed to mineral development; and

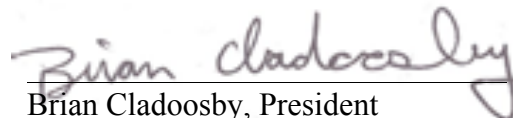
**WHEREAS**, while the plan does not include all of the protections the Tribes sought, the Tribes believe the current plan is an appropriate compromise that strikes a balanced between protection of important areas of traditional use in the Upper Draanjik River Subunit and development in conformity with the BLM's multiple use mandate that goes a long way toward fulfilling the trust responsibility that the BLM has for federally recognized tribes.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the National Congress of American Indians supports the Bureau of Land Management's current Eastern Interior Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement as it allows the Gwichyaa Zhee Gwich'in Tribal Government and the Chalkyitsik Village Council to ensure the protection their traditional homelands and cultural resources for future generations; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

#### CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2016 Annual Convention of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Phoenix Convention Center, October 9 to October 14, 2016, with a quorum present.

  
Brian Cladoosby, President

ATTEST:

  
Aaron Payment, Recording Secretary